

The Road Less Traveled – Exodus 14:13-16

I. Introduction:

- A. How difficult was it for the children of Israel to face the Red Sea while feeling the rumbling of Pharaoh's chariots growing stronger and stronger behind them?
1. Moses tells them they are going to see God's salvation, but it was difficult to look past the circumstances.
 2. The Israelites had no weapons, so they were told *"the Lord shall fight for you, & ye shall hold your peace."*
 3. Doesn't that last phrase essentially say, *"Shut up and watch the Lord do His thing"?*
 4. The Lord said, "Moses, *lift thou up thy rod, and stretch thine hand over the sea, and divide it.*"
 5. *"And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea."*
- B. There are several lessons here relating to practical Christian faith.
1. And the first was that if Israel didn't believe God and move forward they were going to die.
 2. Can we make that a general statement: trust God and move or you will quickly dry up?
 3. Our lives are not often attacked with that degree of crisis, but it does happen from time to time.
 4. Once in a while the doctor tells a family member, *"You have cancer. You should expect to die soon."*
 5. **Can** we move forward under those circumstances? **Will** we move forward?
- C. Even without all the related material, the actual exodus of Israel from Egypt takes us through five chapters.
1. God tells Pharaoh what He is going to do in chapter 11, then Israel is given that information in the next.
 2. Chapters 13 and 14 describe the journey out of Egypt, and then chapter 15 contains Moses' song of praise.
 3. All-in-all, the Holy Spirit gives us about seventy-five verses of information in **Exodus** alone.
 4. This must be important. This should be helpful.
- D. Let's consider the actual exodus and its **preparatory** faith, its **prosperous** faith and the **passing** of that faith.

II. Before Israel could reach the Red Sea, she had to pass under the red blood of the Passover.

- A. That in itself involved a great deal of faith – to trust in a vicarious sacrifice, for specific real results?
1. Back in **Genesis 15** God told Abraham that his children would be afflicted 400 years in a strange land.
 2. After thirty years of peace under Joseph's rule *"there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph,"* and the four centuries of affliction began. During that time Israel was beaten to a spiritless pulp.
 3. But then, toward the end of the 4th century God raised up Moses, the deliverer. That took 80 years in itself.
 4. Then after the initial introductions God began to judge Egypt with plagues, some of which Israel also experienced.
 5. But as things progressed, God made a difference between His people and the people of the world.
 6. For example, *"Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; & there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days; they saw not one another... but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings."*
 7. During those increasingly severe *"natural disasters,"* Israel's faith in the Lord was slowly growing.
- B. When the day came for the tenth and final plague, Israel was ready to offer the blood of the Passover.
1. How much faith was involved in that sacrifice?
 2. The amount and degree of faith are not particularly important.
 3. What is important is upon whom the faith is placed.
 4. Believe and trust the Lord with all the faith you can muster, even though it is only a thimble full.
 5. We must trust the Lord – not our faith.
 6. Everything about those few days of Moses's leadership – God's presence, the plagues, the hope of deliverance were all new to Israel. A month earlier all of this would have been inconceivable.
- C. Of course, salvation is a gift from God, and it is received through humble faith.
1. The sacrifice of the Passover was made by faith. Israel's salvation on two levels was by faith.
 2. How many families in Israel sacrificed the Passover? It appears to have been universal.
 3. *"And the children of Israel went away, and did as the Lord had commanded Moses" – (12:28).*

4. That in itself was miraculous.
 5. But the truth is: faith is contagious. The faith of Moses and Aaron pulled faith out of others in Israel.
- D. Looking back, the progress of that faith, which took a nation of slaves – utter sheep – right up to the shore of the Red Sea, was somewhat arduous. It was painful. Israel had to learn that **Jehovah** is really **God**.
1. The people had to learn that **God** is really **God**; that He is in sovereign control over all things.
 2. They had to accept God's leadership through Moses and Aaron.
 3. And those men were telling Israel to trust God; they were telling the people to expect the unexpected.
 4. *"The Lord is going to bring you out of Egypt, just as He promised Abraham. Believe it."*
- E. Is the shallowness of our faith, and even our lack of faith, due to the fact, we haven't learned the lessons which God has already given to us?
1. You understand that we were saved by God through faith, without the addition of anything else.
 2. If God can deliver us from wrath, *"how shall He not with Christ, give us all things – more things?"*
 3. And do you remember the way the Lord miraculously brought you safely through that bout of influenza? He can bring you through the Red Sea as well.
 4. He who can fill you with manna can also fill you with the power of the Holy Spirit. But will you rely on Him?
 5. The Lord has given us promises just as He did to Abraham, but do we trust Him to keep those promises?
 6. He is willing to bless us in our big needs, things requiring big faith, just as He blessed us in our little faith.

III. There was **PREPARATORY** faith leading up to the really **PRIZE-WINNING** faith.

- A. Once again, Pharaoh said to Moses, *"Get out."*
1. *"And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle.*
 - a. *And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead.*
 - b. *And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said.*
 - c. *Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also.*
 - d. *And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men" – Exodus 12:29-33.*
 2. Pharaoh might have said, *"This time I really mean it. Leave Egypt before we all die."*
- B. But then, we read in **14:5-8** – *"And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?*
1. *And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him: And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them.*
 2. *And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with an high hand."*
 3. Don't run away from it... don't hide from it... because the Bible declares it...
 4. God hardened Pharaoh's heart, and He did so for several reasons, one of which was to test Israel's growing faith.
- C. With joy, Israel walked under the blood soaked doorways of their homes in preparation for their departure.
1. They gathered under the leadership of Moses, and became somewhat organized for their journey.
 2. Their Egyptian neighbors had willingly given them of their own gold and silver.
 3. For the first time in some of their lives, the people of Israel could hear wear some jewelry and hear the jingling of coins in their pockets. This must have encouraged their faith.
 4. But our faith shouldn't be built on earthly gold. This wealth is nothing compared to what is coming up.

- D. There was great excitement and anticipation, but then came a bit of confusion.
1. Why were they being led south when the land promised to Abraham lay to the northeast?
 2. *“And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt:*
 3. *But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt” – Exodus 13:17.*
 4. The reference to being harnessed speaks of their dress and equipment.
 5. They were well equipped and ready for a long march. But they were headed in the wrong direction.
- E. And then they learned that Pharaoh had a change of mind – not a change of heart – because that was the same as it had always been.
1. *“He took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them.”*
 2. There were the chariots of Pharaoh’s personal guards – the very best of the very best.
 3. And then came the chariots of the general Egyptian army.
 4. Many were equipped with scythes on the wheels for the purpose of mowing down a defenseless enemy.
 5. Under the circumstances it would be easy to slaughter the people of God.
- F. Now, Israel can you still trust the Lord? How strong is your faith?
1. Can you trust Him even though all logic says you have no hope?
 2. **This** is the kind of faith **we** are supposed to have.
 3. Build your faith on the what you learn of God in this chapter.
- G. With every trial to our faith we are supplied with a few more tools to strengthen our future faith.
1. Look at **Exodus 11:7** – *“Against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.”*
 2. There are always little evidences and arguments for greater faith. Here the dogs encourage us.
 3. I wonder if anyone looked around at the people who were preparing for that march.
 - a. Even the octogenarians were in surprisingly good health.
 - b. **Psalm 105:37** says, the Lord, *“brought them forth also with silver and gold, and there was not one feeble person among their tribes.”* The God who can do these things can do so much more. Trust Him.
- H. **Exodus 13:21** – *“And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of cloud... from before the people.”*
1. Are you envious of Israel for the blessing of this pillar? Don’t be.
 2. They probably would have been equally envious of you, for your possession of the written Word of God.
 3. Not only can **we** bolster our faith by looking at the pillar of cloud and fire in their lives, but we have hundreds of other examples and lessons for our faith – things which they didn’t have.
 4. With the leadership of that pillar Israel came to the sea, trapped between an angry army and the Red Sea.
 5. *“And they said unto Moses, Because there were not graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?”*
 6. *“Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.”*
- I. Isn’t this so typical?
1. Many Christians would not mind witnessing and serving Christ, and even experiencing the great power of God, so long as there isn’t any risk involved.
 2. We love the Lord and want Him to be glorified, and if those blessings spill over onto us, that would fine.
 3. But do we have the faith necessary to enjoy these things through the anger and opposition of God’s enemy?

4. *“And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.*
 - a. *And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward:*
 - b. *But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.”*

J. You know the rest of the story – the history of Israel’s exodus from Egypt.

1. Defying all the laws of physics, chemistry and logic, the water of the Red Sea rolled aside, and instantly the soggy ground under the sea became like pavement, permitting Israel to cross that flat-bottomed body of water.
2. But when Pharaoh later entered the same channel, at the command of God, the waters returned and the Lord’s enemy was destroyed.

K. I am not one of those Christians who yearns to see the destruction of God’s enemies.

1. I am convinced that the Lord will have His vengeance, but it will come in God’s time.
2. I prefer the sword of the spirit than the sword of the military soldier.
3. When the rebellion at the end of the Millennium is finished and the last enemy is destroyed by the Lord Himself, we will pick up a new version of Moses’ psalm, and we will sing Christ’s praises with a full voice and full joy.
4. But in the mean time, I am thankful for the deliverance of my soul and the souls of the people around me.

L. The question is: do I, do we, have the faith necessary to raise the rod of God over the impossible obstacle?

1. Can we trust the One, whom we know to be omnipotent, to do what is miraculous?
2. He has divided the sea and dried up the Jordan to let His people through.
3. And He has sent revival after revival and at times saved souls in groups of hundreds.
4. Can He do the same today? Of course He can! The problem is not with the Lord, but with us.
5. Let us plead with God to give us the faith of Moses.

IV. Conclusion

A. Now, just to give this message its requisite third point, let me take you down a few verses to **Exodus 16:3**.

1. Within days of passing through the Red Sea, the faithlessness of Israel again reared its ugly head.
2. Just after spending a few days learning Moses’ song of praise in **chapter 15**, we read, *“And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”*

B. The point is: victorious, practical faith is very hard to attain.

1. Sometimes, with the Lord’s gifts, we **find** that faith and **use** that faith. But then it is very easy to cast aside.
2. Today you may be able to trust the Lord for the salvation of your friend, expecting his conversion very soon
3. But if he isn’t saved this week, can you trust the Lord to save him next week, and if necessary week after week?
4. You heard about a great revival in a Baptist church a hundred years ago, and today you are excited hopeful and even expectant for the same in our church, but it hasn’t come.
5. How long will your faith and prayer fill your heart?
6. How urgent is your need of God’s blessings? How patient are you?
7. Can you feel the rumbling of Pharaoh’s chariots? The enemy is no unaware of your desire for God’s glory.
8. Will you trust the Lord to answer your faith as you stretch out the rod of God?